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NOT JUST A NASTY HABIT

Tobacco Is Believed Tranquilizing Agent

By David M. Cleary
Science Writer

ANN ARBOR, Mich.—Nobody knows just why the habit of smoking tobacco got started. Spread of the practice through the civilized world has been charted, but there has been no satisfactory explanation of its popularity.

For many of us, it seemed that there was something restful about a "smoke" between periods of work, and the sight of a man smoking a cigar after a big meal always seemed to present a picture of relaxation.

And now it turns out, according to medical researchers at the University of Michigan Medical School here, that we may have been on the right track all the time.

They've found that the smoke of burning tobacco has an effect on the brain somewhat similar to that of modern tranquilizing drugs, although much less potent.

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"REMARKABLE BRAIN responses" have been found by Dr. Edward F. Domino, an associate professor of pharmacology, when he planted delicate electrodes in the brains of dogs and then exposed the animals to tobacco smoke.

The reaction to smoke is picked up by the olfactory nerves, and carried to the portion of the brain believed to be the seat of the emotions, where unusually strong electrical discharges were registered.

Modern tranquilizing drugs affect the same portions of the brain, but do their work through the blood stream rather than the olfactory nerves, says Dr. Domino.

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IN DOGS, THE reaction to smoke is quite sensitive, and responses can be obtained with many different kinds of smoke. In addition to tobacco, the doctor burnt dried maple leaves, corn silk, and catnip.

All the varieties of smoke produced essentially the same general effect in brain cells, although Dr. Domino found that "smoke from ordinary tobacco is the least irritating and the gentlest method of achieving the brain-stimulating result."

One of the chief criticisms that might be made of these experiments is that they were conducted with dogs, known to have a highly developed sense of smell. Just as there are some kinds of cancer that can be activated in mice but not in men, this might be simply a phenomenon of dogs, inapplicable to human beings.

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DR. DOMINO anticipated that criticism, however. He and his associates have duplicated their tests in monkeys, whose sense of small is approximately as keen as that of a human being. The results were essentially the same.

The findings to date seem to open a new avenue for investigation of brain action, Dr. Domino says. Continued tests will be conducted in the hope of learning more about our thinking processes, our emotions, and our moods.

But Dr. Domino and his associates have already performed a great service. They've confirmed that smoking isn't just a nasty that smoking isn't just a nasty desire of mankind to play with fire. Instead, they've shown that people who smoke a cigarette to relax have some logical reason for smoking, since the effect on the brain cells is a calming one, however slight.

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IN PASSING, the researchers have also verified another point. Our ancestors who invented smoking, although they had no modern traffic jams, commuter problems or phones to answer, had their troubles too.

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EDITORIAL PAGE
MASON CITY GLOBE-GAZETTE

Tobacco's guilt can't be assumed

A DAILY NEWSPAPER at York, Pa., has announced a bar on tobacco advertising. Its decision is called "an ethical one," not wishing "to encourage anyone to use something a high authority indicated might prove deeply harmful.

That, of course, is one point of view. But it isn't necessarily the right point of view. To many fair-minded people it will seem to be bringing in a verdict before the defendant has had a chance to give his side of the case.

While there is some impressive evidence that tobacco, or something that goes into cigarets, causes cancer, or makes smokers cancer-prone, the proof of this is by no means complete and irrefutable. Authorities are divided on the matter.

Until that time comes, most newspapers will believe it their prime function to report the truth from day to day, never to consider mere allegation to be the same as conviction.

Such a course strikes us as being more in the spirit of democratic procedure and free enterprise, more in the tradition of a free press than the policy adopted by the Pennsylvania daily.

This, by way of background, is written by an editor who just 10 years ago decided on his own against the further use of tobacco in any form.

If we were motivated by prejudice, we quite obviously would be in the same corner with the York Gazette and Daily.

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